EAST BAY EXPRESS

MARCH 18-24, 2015 THE EAST BAY'S INDEPENDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1978 EASTBAYEXPRESS.COM

Shifting Gears

How Oakland can become a world-class bicycling city — and boost the economy, improve the environment, and save lives in the process.

By Sam Levin





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NEWS&OPINION



LETTERS

Skateboarding Is a Culture

Join the Fight

Coliseum City Makes Sense

Coliseum City Is a Pipe Dream

NPR Discovers The Town

Nice Addition!

Can't Wait

You Forgot One

Umm, There Was an Oakland Before 1999

Oakland Needs to Be More Teacher-Friendly

It's Bliss



Cal Performances
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April 15
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goose salad by Sarah at Commonwealth Table this week. Very relaxed and no-fancy vibe with a Nina Simone album playing in the background. Bliss!

Deborah Lindsay, Oakland

Why Didn't You Talk to the Workers?

I wish waiters and waitresses would have their time in the sun in this paper! Why are only restaurant owners being interviewed for these articles? Let's hear from the people who are working for minimum wage (busboys, dishwashers, line cooks, etc.)! Also, one of the reasons to work as a waitress is *for the tips*! Why would we do it otherwise? In all the restaurants I have ever worked in, a percentage of tips went to the busboys, dishwashers, and cooks. Why isn't that standard practice?

Nadja Lemesky, Berkeley

The Unintended Consequences of Obamacare

The public dialogue about the merits of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and its value to the lives of Americans has raged widely. One side of the debate contends that it kills jobs, is an invasion of privacy, and represents an example of governmental overreach. Meanwhile, architects of the law and its supporters sing its praises based on the belief that affordable healthcare is a right of every American. I share this view. But I'm also outraged by the prospect of being saddled with a bill from Covered California for services that I neither needed nor used.

My wife and I have a two-year-old son. We both supported the ACA long before we ever thought we'd need it. We believe that equitable access to healthcare is a fundamental right. Ironically, due to a corporate restructuring, in March of 2014, we found ourselves needing affordable insurance. Thankfully, there was Covered California (the state's version of ACA). To continue our care at Kaiser Permanente, I enrolled my family in Covered California while I transitioned jobs. The enrollment process was fairly painless, and I paid the Kaiser Family Foundation for coverage through the state exchange for April, May, and June. As healthy people, we had no significant medical visits during this time, outside of general wellness visits or a previously scheduled visit to the pediatrician for our then sixteen-month-old.

In May of 2014, I secured employer-sponsored insurance that was to begin on July 1, 2014. As such, I contacted Kaiser Member Services in June to cancel the Covered California Plan. Kaiser indicated they could not cancel the plan. Rather, I would need to directly contact Covered California, which would then give authorization for the cancellation. But it was impossible to reach anyone. So I called again. Then again. And again. After several months, still nothing.

The call hold times were interminable. I called mornings and midday. I called in the afternoon. I called from my mobile phone, from our home phone, from my office. Still, no luck. After a recorded message indicating that someone would be with me shortly, rather the line would disconnect, as I would be on hold for so long that I'd simply give up. It was exhausting. After several months, I turned my attention to the original enrollment counselor. After corresponding via email, she stated that she "did not have authority to cancel it." My wife and I spent several more months calling. Then finally on November 26, 2014, after five months of calls and email, I reached a live person. You can imagine the relief I felt given the emotional investment and concern over months of incurring invoices for a plan that I neither needed nor used. I was told I'd be able to cancel the plan. The representative indicated that there were limitations to the current system that precluded her from backdating the cancellation but based on general public confusion and longer-than-average wait times, that I could rest assured that the plan would be cancelled and the bills rescinded.

Per her request, I authored a paragraph that summarized my circumstances and asked for a phone hearing that I submitted via fax to Covered California. That hearing was scheduled for Tuesday March 10, 2015 at 10:45 a.m. In the call, I was asked whether I'd received correspondence from Covered California outlining its position. I had not. After taking a few minutes to sift through my junk email, I was able to retrieve it. Dated Monday March 9, 2015 at 1:17 p.m., it was sent less than 24 hours before the hearing and read, in part: "You have requested that the cancellation date be made retro-active to 6/30/14. Unfortunately, I am unable to assist you with this request. All cancellations are processed on the day the consumer makes the request by contacting the Covered CA Service Center. I do understand that it may have been difficult to reach a representative at times, but there were many opportunities to have this completed since you obtained employer coverage on 7/1/14...."

The position that Covered California took in the hearing is that my petition for a backdated cancellation has been denied because there is no provision in the law for backdating a cancellation. The issue here is whether the ACA intended to preclude cancellation procedures for citizens to accommodate call demand or technical shortfalls.

So here I am: a supporter of ACA faced with paying nearly $2,000 for a service that I neither needed nor used. It would be tragic if the story here were that the government intervened in the healthcare market place, ostensibly to save Americans from big, bad insurance companies, only to rip off the very consumers it purports to protect.

[illegible], Oakland

Correction

Our March 11 news story "Another Building East Bay Campaign," misstated Juan [illegible] campaign slogan. It's "Positively for Us" — not "Positively Juan."

A Drop in the Bucket

As California's water supply plummets to scary levels, state officials are targeting people who overwater their lawns. That's a good idea. But they're not the worst culprits.

By Robert Gammon







ECO WATCH

What's Killing the Baby Sea Lions?

Environmentalists say the overfishing of sardines — the main food source for sea lion mothers — is to blame. Fishermen say that's a crock.

By Alastair Bland





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City of Oakland

The Coliseum Area Specific Plan also includes areas that surround the proposed Coliseum City project.

NEWS

Activists Shape Coliseum Area Plan

A large coalition of activist groups pushed successfully for affordable housing goals, local hiring, and environmental mitigations.

By Jean Tepperman

A massive, 25-year plan for developing a big swath of East Oakland, from the Coliseum to the airport, will go to the Oakland City Council on March 31. But the plan looks very different from the first draft issued by the city last August. Planning commissioners credited the changes to feedback from community groups and public agencies.

"Thanks to the leadership of dozens of residents, workers, faith leaders, and youth, the plan has evolved significantly," said East Oakland resident Reverend Damita Davis-Howard, a member of Oakland Community Organizations (OCO). The plan, Davis-Howard continued, now "incorporates elements of our vision of good jobs for local residents; affordable housing, especially for families, and measures to stabilize neighborhoods and contribute to a cleaner environment."

The first draft of the Coliseum Area Specific Plan included a projection of "up to" 42,000 new jobs over a twenty- to twenty-five year period, but made no mention of affordable housing. The original plan also gave scant attention to nearby communities.

Most media attention to the Coliseum area has focused, not on the public planning process, but on the private negotiations that the city is holding with developers and sports teams to build Coliseum City, a mega-project that also would include hotels, housing, retail, and restaurants and bars. "The main goal is for us to keep our sports franchises playing in that space," said Councilmember Larry Reid, whose district includes the Coliseum.

Both the A's and the Raiders want new facilities, but Mayor Libby Schaaf has said repeatedly that no city money will be used to build sports venues. Public money to provide the necessary infrastructure will come from funds earmarked for transportation-related projects, she said. But Reid explained that the city can entice a developer to put money into new sports facilities "by offering the opportunity to develop the adjacent land into a new 'vibrant, urban, mixed-use community.'" Coliseum City is to be built within the larger project area known as the *Coliseum Area Specific Plan*.

When the city released the Coliseum area plan, community organizations and unions started talking with East Oakland residents and Coliseum workers. Residents who heard about the plan had mixed reactions. "I live less than a mile from this beautiful project," said Nehanda Imara, an organizer for Communities for a Better Environment (CBE). "If it's done right it can transform the community and be integrated as part of East Oakland." Many neighbors welcomed the long-needed investment.

But many also shared Imara's concern that the first version of the plan, "as it didn't include those who live [nearby]," that the development would be an "alien space city" plopped down in East Oakland. "We don't want to see, 'We're here now, let's move you out,'" said Tamarah Sherry, a neighborhood resident and member of Causa Justa/Just Cause (CJJC). "We want the developers to see the community as an asset. East Oakland has a lot of creativity, a rich culture. It's important the Coliseum City supports that."

Johnny Bain, a member of Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 2850, has worked at the Coliseum for 33 years. No matter who ends up running the sports venues, he said, "We want to keep our jobs, our seniority, to make a decent living. We want to make sure the jobs remain good, union jobs, and the new hotels will be staffed by union members."

Bain also lives in the neighborhood. "We want current residents to be able to stay here and new development to be affordable for low-income households," he said. His concerns were echoed by a group of high school students who have been studying the plan. One student, Jennifer Franco, explained that "with more people with money coming in, [landlords] might want to raise the rent. That might drive current East Oakland residents to other places."

Another student, Javier Barrera, added that "local businesses should get the contracts" to build the development. His classmate, Emmanuel Barrera, said new retail districts should include local stores. "If big corporations make the money it's not going to go to Oakland," he said. "Money going to local business helps our community."

"As they build their city, we'd like to get low-income housing for this area — in our price range," said local resident Tianda Pak of East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO). "Some things that are called affordable housing are not affordable by the average person making $10 an hour." The median household income in the census tract including the Coliseum is $30,000 a year, and many residents already struggle with housing costs.

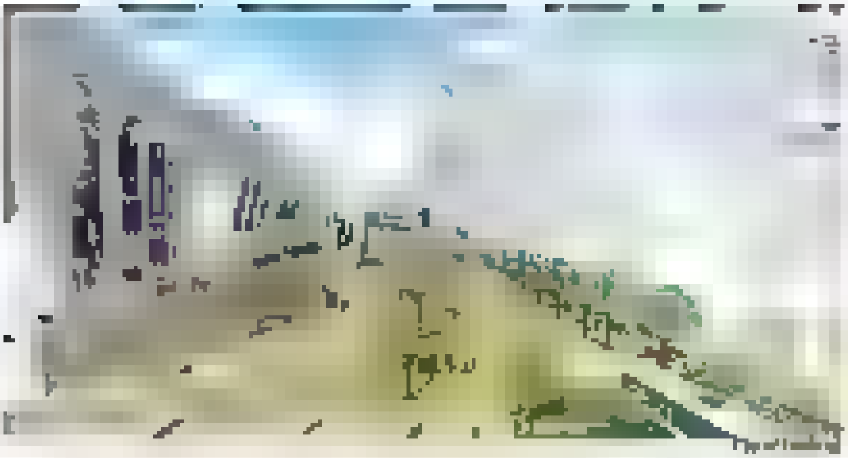
Building affordable housing close to BART also has environmental benefits, according to a recent study by TransForm and the California Housing Partnership Corporation. The report shows that lower-income people living near transit take public transportation more and are more likely to give up their cars than those who can afford market-rate housing.

Development in the area around the Coliseum is actually only the first part of the Coliseum area plan. "The plan is not the project. The plan is very long-term. It's a vision," Mayor Schaaf said in an interview. The plan also includes an ambitious goal of building a "regionally significant jobs and employment center" including a new science and technology district on the bay side of the 880 freeway.

Residents who attended community briefings about the project asked for policies ensuring that some of those new jobs would go to Oakland residents, specifically requesting job training and local hiring programs. Tonja Falkenberg, who works at the Coliseum, added that the plan should "ban the box" (asking about criminal records) from employment forms. "All these people are coming out of prison, you gotta have jobs for them," she said.

Some advocates and local business owners also expressed concerns that the plan could displace existing businesses. Fred Ellis of the Oakland Works Alliance told the Planning Commission, "We oppose zoning changes that remove East Oakland's business park." Oakland Works members fear that by permitting housing in the Airport Business Park, the plan would drive up land values and push current businesses out. "We should preserve jobs that people actually have," said Kimberly Mayfield of Black Women Organized for Political Action.

Community organizations including OCO, CJJC, CBE, and EBHO, studied the draft plan and joined together with unions, faith leaders, and other community groups





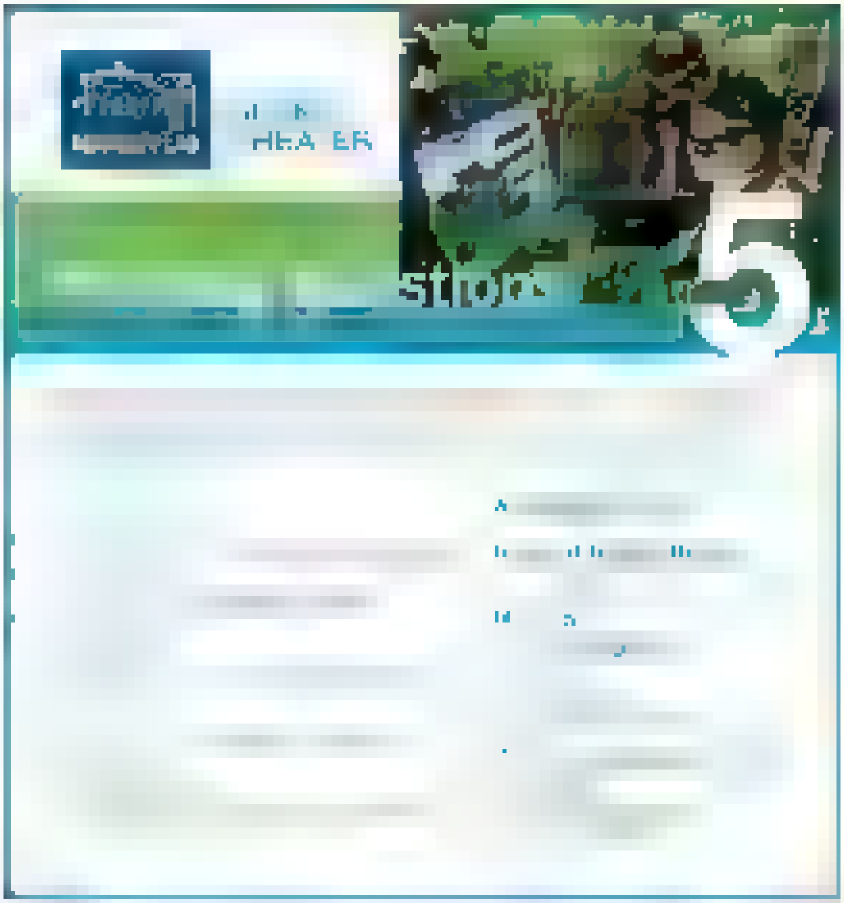
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Shifting Gears

How Oakland can become a world-class city for bicycling — and save lives, boost the economy, and improve the environment at the same time.

By Sam Levin

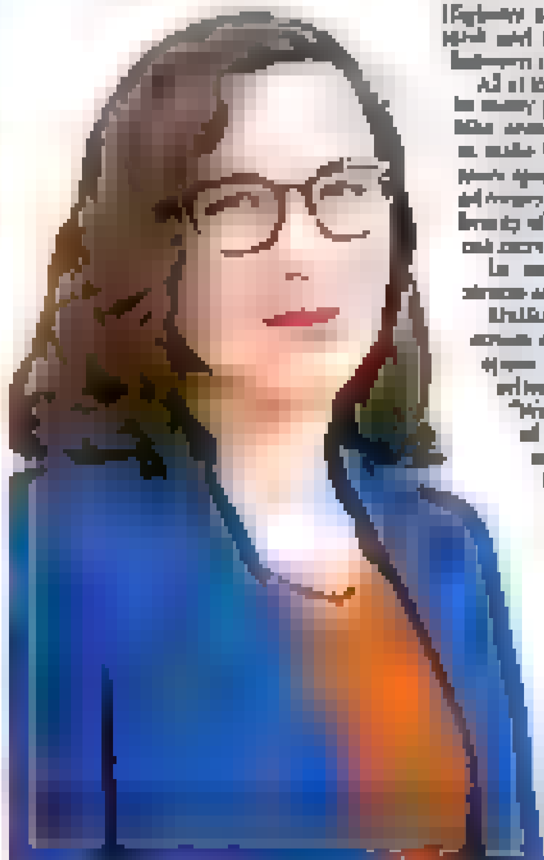



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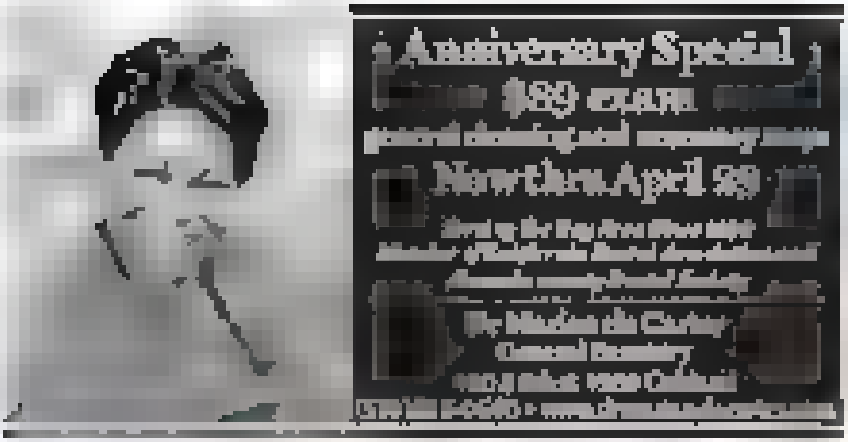

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LARGEST SELECTION OF HARD PARTS IN THE BAY AREA
ALL MAKES, MODELS, AND YEARS





environmental projects and take some space away from cars, even in the face of local opposition.

"It comes down to political leadership and the willingness to take risks," said Elizabeth Sanders, an expert on bike and pedestrian planning and former researcher at UC Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research and Education Center. "When people are willing to take risks, there's been a lot of evidence that those risks have been rewarded with results."

In the future, experts agreed, the leading cities in bike infrastructure will have fully connected networks of bike lanes that are meaningfully separated from car traffic, such as the parking-protected lanes that Oakland is installing on Telegraph Avenue. A successful bike network also requires creative solutions to ensure bike safety at intersections where cyclists make left turns or where cars want to make right turns across bike lanes.

Roger Geller, bicycle coordinator with the Bureau of Transportation in Portland, told me that Portland has built a extensive network of [illegible] bikeway miles — and is [illegible] working to upgrade the lanes, converting many [illegible] to more protected ones. Since [illegible], Portland has also implemented nearly thirty "bike boxes," which are green-painted boxes on the pavement at intersections that give cyclists a designated spot in front of cars to wait during a red light, he said. The box is designed to prevent motorists from hitting bikes when making a right turn by providing a highly visible space for cyclists in typical danger zones.

Since [illegible], Portland has also installed numerous bike-specific traffic signals, which give cyclists an opportunity to [illegible] intersections while car traffic is halted. Portland has also done a good job analyzing the benefits of its infrastructure. The city estimates that the cost of building its entire bikeway network is equivalent to the cost of constructing just one mile of urban freeway, Geller noted. And by many measures, the return on that investment has been [illegible].

For example, from [illegible] to 2011, per capita driving trips in Portland declined by [illegible] percent as more people chose to ride bikes — a shift that [illegible] million fewer driving trips by Portland residents each year. The significantly below-average driving rate in the city also translates to $[illegible] billion in savings in general car costs, money that circulates back into the economy, according to an analysis Geller completed.

"If our bicycle use hadn't increased, we would just see [illegible] more automobile trips on the road today," Geller said, noting that as Portland's population has grown and as more people travel through the city on a daily basis, traffic congestion on key routes has not gotten worse. "Bikes are perhaps the most cost-effective way to move people."

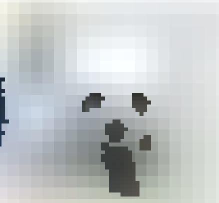
A 2011 *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* analysis on the health benefits of biking also predicted that by 2040, Portland's investments in bike infrastructure could translate to savings in healthcare costs as high as $[illegible] million.

Progressive bike cities have also demonstrated the connection between cycling and economic development — another important lesson for Oakland in how walkable and bikeable retail corridors can translate to better business. Bike advocates pointed me to the efforts of the City of Long Beach, which has a population similar to that of Oakland and comparable traffic concerns — and has documented the economic benefits of a number of progressive bike planning initiatives.

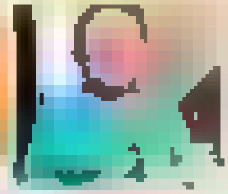
After Long Beach installed a protected bike lane in its downtown in [illegible], the results were staggering, said Allan Crawford, former bike coordinator for the city who is now the executive director of advocacy group [illegible].

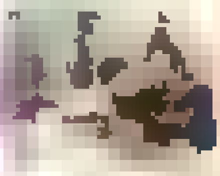
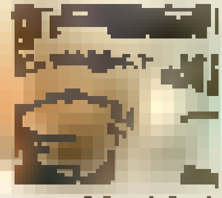
In downtown, the city saw a roughly [illegible] percent increase in cyclists and a roughly [illegible] percent reduction in vehicle collisions (as car speeds dropped [illegible]). And the local economy thrived, Crawford said. "New businesses are coming in because that's the culture they want," he



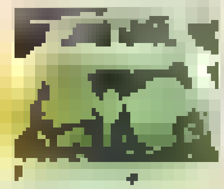



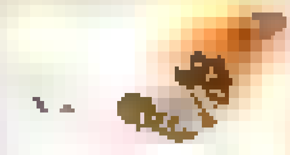
























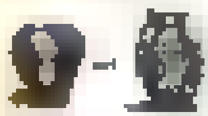


























Your Life Is Precious

Despite Susan O'Malley's sudden death, Kala Institute puts the finishing touches on her public art project in West Berkeley.

By Sarah Burke

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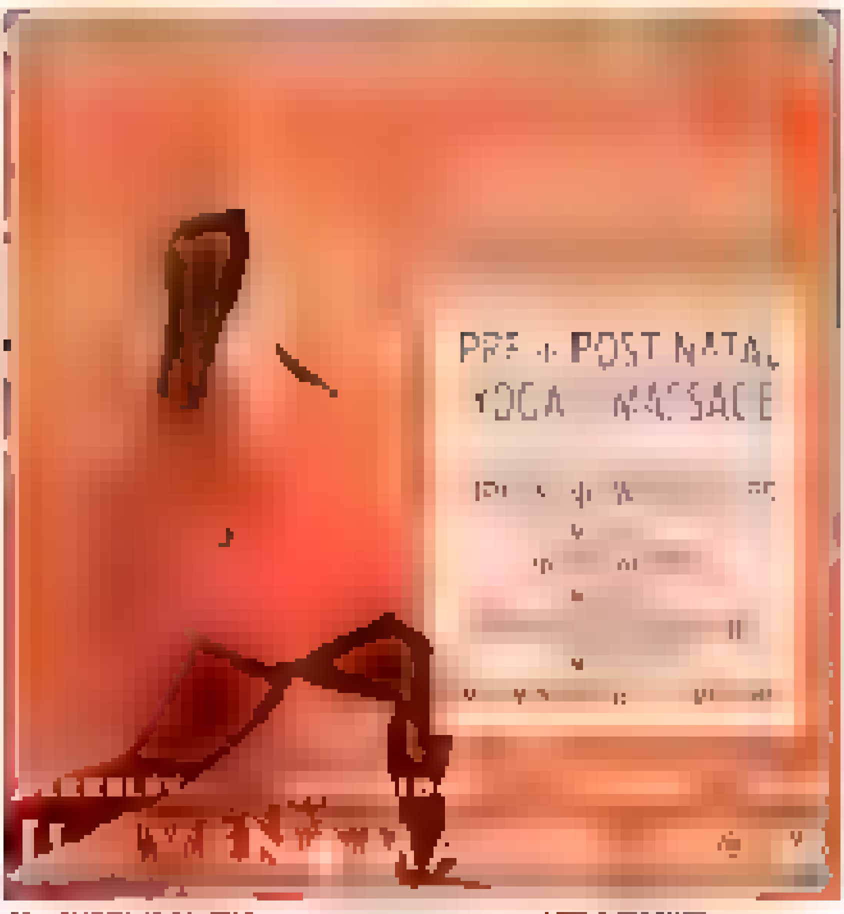
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More Listings Online

Poems for Unraveling Capitalism

Local small press Timeless, Infinite Light publishes poetry that experiments with language to express radical concerns.

By Sarah Burke







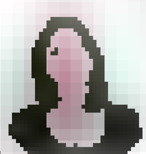
Chris Eckert, Waiting Machine



More Listings Online

Tweens, Teens, and Tech

How much is too much?









Algerian Food Comes to Berkeley

Sample Menu




What The


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By Luke Tsai

Preserved


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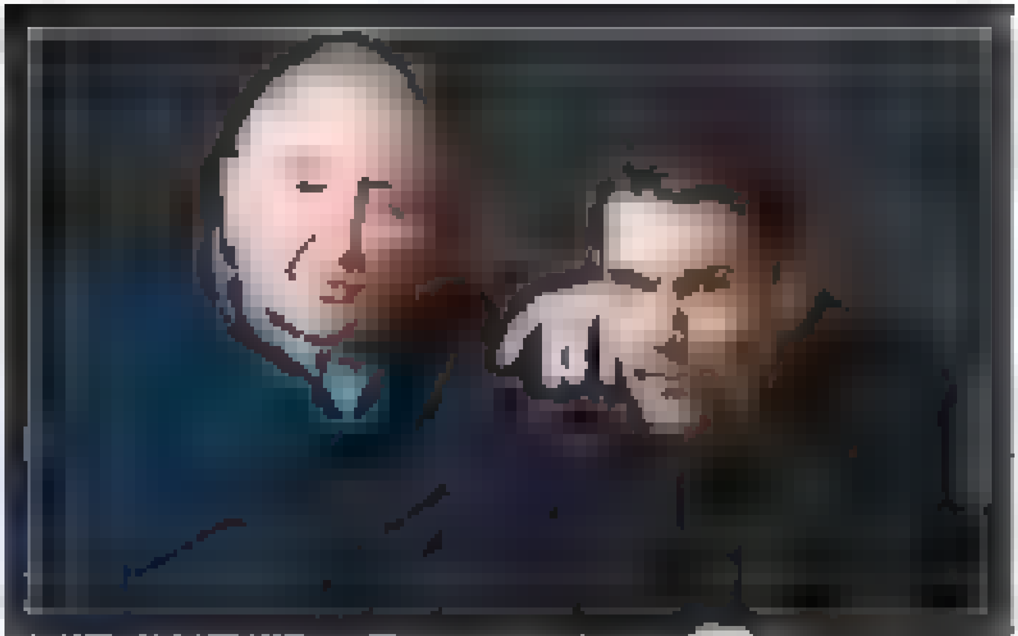
The Gunman

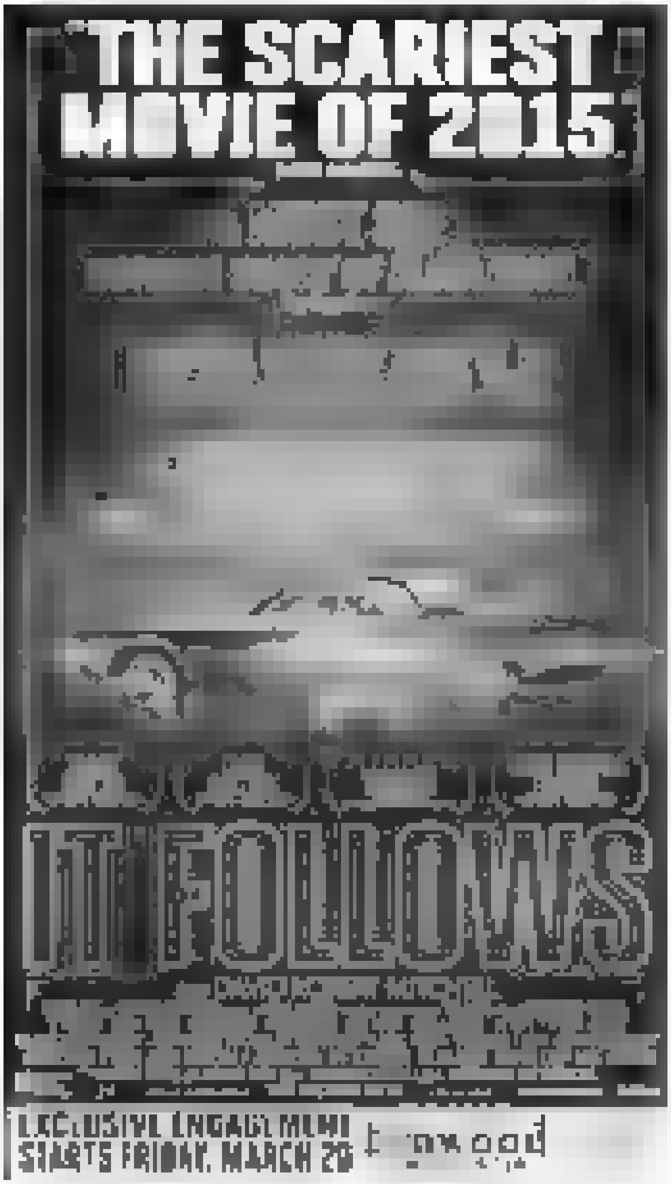
Seymour: An Introduction

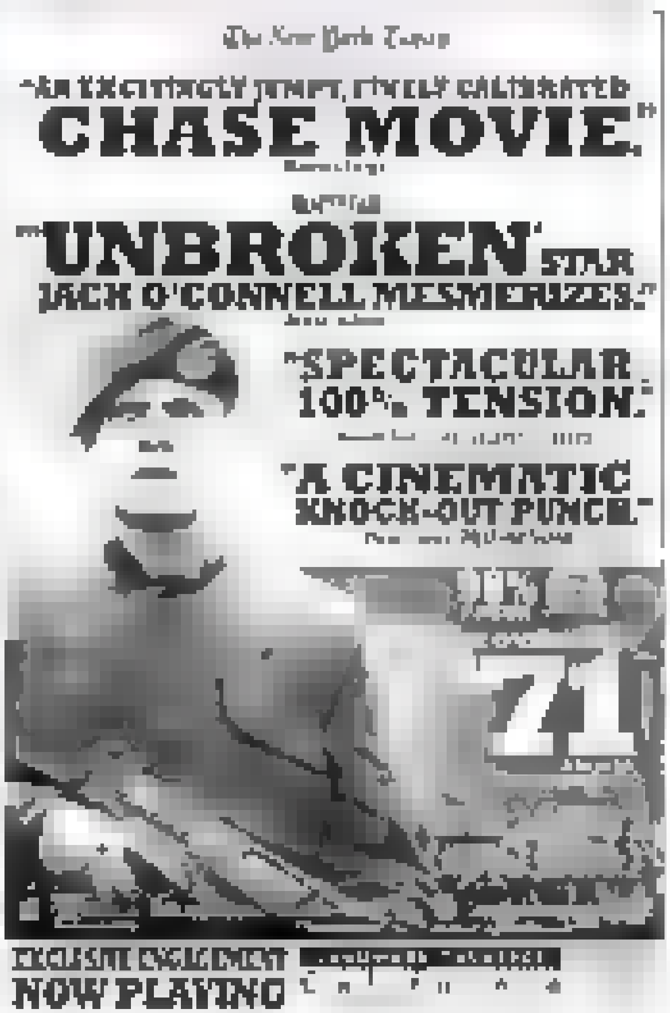
OPENINGS

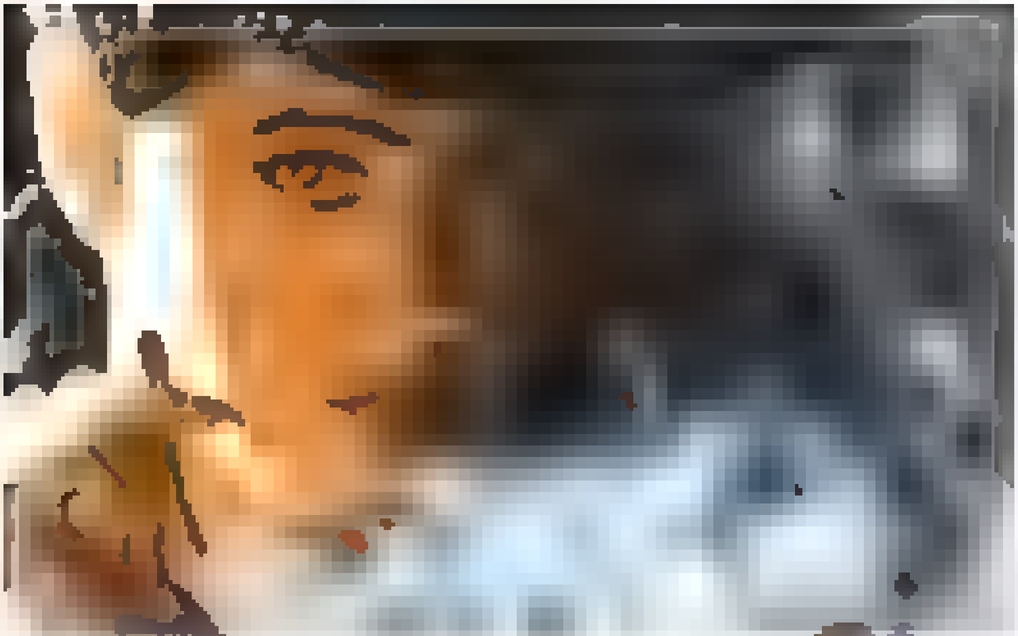
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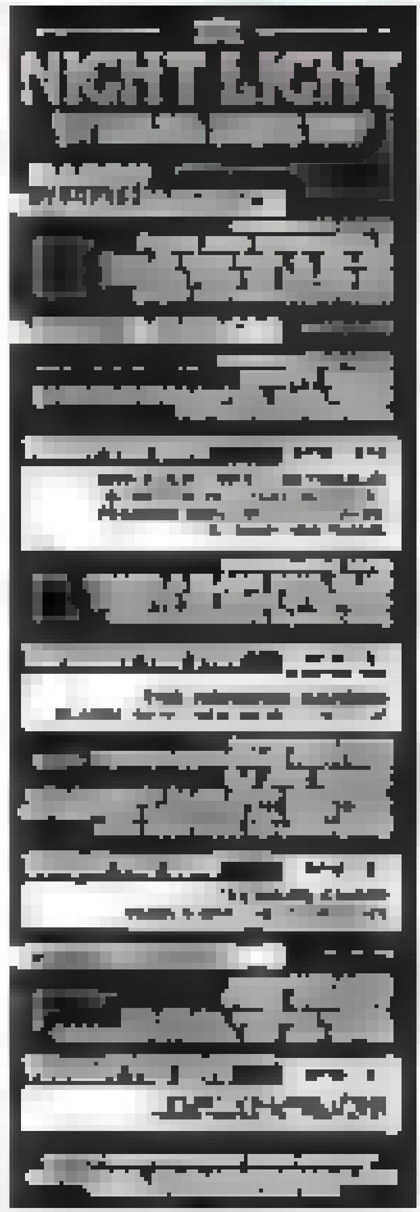
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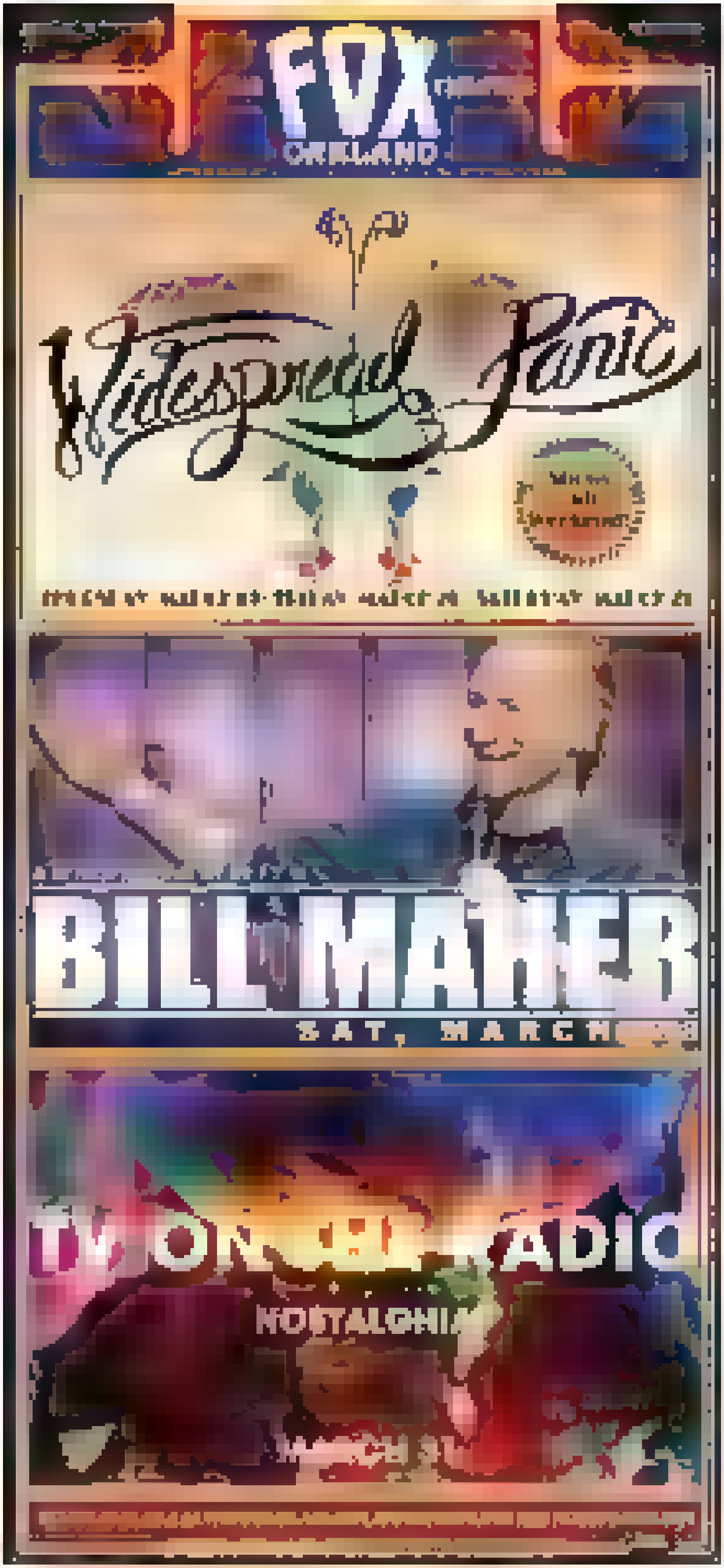
ONE-NIGHT STANDS

White-Collar Squatters









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Talent Night at the Ashram

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THURSDAY 19

All Ages

Blues, Folk, & Country

Classical & Opera

Experimental & Avant-Garde

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Rock & Pop

Soul, Funk, R&B, & Hip-Hop

World, Latin, Reggae, & Reggaeton

Blues, Folk, & Country

Experimental & Avant-Garde

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Rock & Pop

FRIDAY 20

Blues, Folk, & Country

Classical & Opera

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Rock & Pop

Soul, Funk, R&B, & Hip-Hop

Experimental & Avant-Garde

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Rock & Pop

Soul, Funk, R&B, & Hip-Hop

World, Latin, Reggae, & Reggaeton


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Left Bank Dance Party: A Fundraiser for the BlackOut Collective



Charlemagne Palestine

SATURDAY 21

Blues, Folk, & Country

Classical & Opera

Experimental & Avant Garde

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Rock & Pop

Soul, Funk, R&B, & Hip-Hop

World, Latin, Reggae, & Reggaeton

Rock & Pop

FIND THE EXPRESS

ALAMEDA

ALBANY

BERKELEY

EMERYVILLE

OAKLAND

RICHMOND/EL CERRITO

SAN LEANDRO



Papers delivered by bicycle!



Soul, Funk, R&B, & Hip-Hop

SUNDAY 22

All Ages

Blues, Folk, & Country

Classical & Opera

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Rock & Pop

Soul, Funk, R&B, & Hip-Hop

World, Latin, Reggae, & Reggaeton

Blues, Folk, & Country

Classical & Opera

Experimental & Avant-Garde

VENUE DIRECTORY EAST BAY

Gospel & Vocal

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Rock & Pop

Soul, Funk, R&B, & Hip-Hop

World, Latin, Reggae, & Reggaeton

MONDAY 23

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Rock & Pop

Blues, Folk, & Country

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Rock & Pop

TUESDAY 24

All Ages

Blues, Folk, & Country

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Blues, Folk, & Country

Experimental & Avant-Garde

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Rock & Pop

WEDNESDAY 25

All Ages

Blues, Folk, & Country

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Rock & Pop

Soul, Funk, R&B, & Hip-Hop

World, Latin, Reggae, & Reggaeton

Blues, Folk, & Country

Jazz, Lounge, & Cabaret

Rock & Pop

THURSDAY 19

FRIDAY 20

SATURDAY 21

SUNDAY 22

MONDAY 23

TUESDAY 24

WEDNESDAY 25

Free Will Astrology

Horoscopes of the week of March 18–25.

By Rob Brezsny









SAVAGE LOVE

Loving Couples

A potentially traumatic cuckolding foray and monogamy as an opt-in choice

By Dan Savage

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